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ABSTRACT

This project attempted to show that rural disadvantaged young women can be trained for employment as day-care attendants. The nine course participants were selected from a group of women between the ages of 18 and 25 who had previously received training in basic education and life skills. Criteria included physical and mental health, grooming, social behavior, fondness for children, tested and demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of children, and tested and demonstrated interest in working with children. The program lasted 420 hours and was divided into: (1) three weeks of orientation and observation of operating centers, (2) two weeks of intensive theory, and (3) 11 weeks spent in the mornings in a day-care center working under supervision and supervisor instruction. It is not yet possible to conclude that this program has successfully demonstrated that training day-care attendants or providing day care services can provide a useful or valuable input to outreach centers in designated regional growth centers. (CK)

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EVALUATION OF A PROGRAM OF TRAINING FOR
DAY CARE ATTENDANTS

by

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and

Thomas R. Connor

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The following report is based on a project conducted by Prince Edward Island NewStart Inc., a Corporation owned jointly by Prince Edward Island and the Canada Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

Located in Montague, Prince Edward Island, the Company function is to conduct action research in the field of poverty and human resources.

The principal author is Home Management Specialist with the Company; the second author is Director of Research.

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Day Care Centers in urban areas are faced with the problem of staff who are inadequately trained in the concepts of child care. Since there are few, if any Day Care Centers in rural areas this becomes an even greater problem aggravated by the needs of the population and the geographic isolation from urban centers.

The purpose of this project was to show that rural disadvantaged young women can be trained for worth while employment as Day Care Attendants. The disadvantaged young woman often is marriage and family oriented. She may drop out of the educational system early, seek casual employment, work until she has secured a husband, then prepare for motherhood. Having little education or work experience, she has little to offer her own children. Many express the view that work is "something to keep me busy until the children come along".

LITERATURE REVIEW:

As this is a comparatively new field in education, the literature is not extensive in the concept of training the rural disadvantaged young woman as a Day Care Attendant. Most of the present research in this area has been done in the United States, but there are a few references to Canada. Most of the work with Child Care Workers has been done at the College of Applied Arts and Technology level which is post high school. NewStart was interested generally in the high school dropout and potential

occupations for this group.

Berman (1) reported that of five hundred disadvantaged female trainees who enrolled in a program for Child Care Workers, eighty percent graduated, seventy percent were employed and sixty percent obtained Child Care jobs. All trainees increased their self assurance which improved their chances in the job market and helped them in their personal lives.

Naylor and Bittner (2) reported on a program for disadvantaged women to train as pre-school aides. At the end of a four week period of classroom work these women opened and operated a center for forty pre-school children under the guidance of a professional supervisor.

MacInnis (3) reported on the training of nursery school helpers. He recommended training for married women who have raised their own families and for high school girls who drop out after grade ten.

The Council of Social Planning - Alameda County (4) found that disadvantaged young women can work in a Day Care role if the job is properly defined and if the tasks are properly outlined.

The Child Welfare League of America in Standards for Day Care Service (5) indicated that an aide should have some education, training, and experience with children and families to work as non-professionals under the supervision of a professional.

Pearl and Riessman (6) state that the young disadvantaged woman often demonstrates considerable skill in her performance in Day Care positions. Prince Edward Island NewStart, Inc. concurred in this as well as the feeling that the disadvantaged attendant would be able to establish rapport quickly with the disadvantaged child to their mutual benefit.

Taking these as assumptions and with this background support, the training project which is reported here was organized and undertaken.

OBJECTIVES:

The major objective of the program was to train nine day care attendants to work in Day Care Centers with groups of children from 2½ to 6 years of age. This was intended as a demonstration of the feasibility of employing the disadvantaged in positions of responsibility and growth to help other disadvantaged people.

A minor objective was to demonstrate the utility of Day Care Centers as a component in a series of outreach units in previously designated regional growth centers. The latter are a part of the Comprehensive Development Plan for Prince Edward Island (7) funded in part by the Canada Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

In terms of human resource utilization, the objective was to significantly improve the labor market stability of these young women as a result

of the four months of training.

RECRUITMENT:

The nine course participants were selected from among a group of women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who had previously received training in basic education and life skills in a NewStart program. All twenty-four of these trainees had an equal chance to apply for this further training and for selection. Eighteen did apply. The screening and selection group included the previous instructors and counsellors, a guidance counsellor using standardized tests, and the Home Economics co-ordinator who was in charge of the project. Consequently, they were selected on the basis of both tests and subjective judgements. Criteria included physical and mental health, grooming, social behaviour, fondness for children, tested and demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of children, and tested and demonstrated interest in working with children. In addition, they were required to be able and willing to commute for training and employment. The latter factor has proven to be a major problem in the placement of trainees and graduates in Prince Edward Island NewStart's experience.

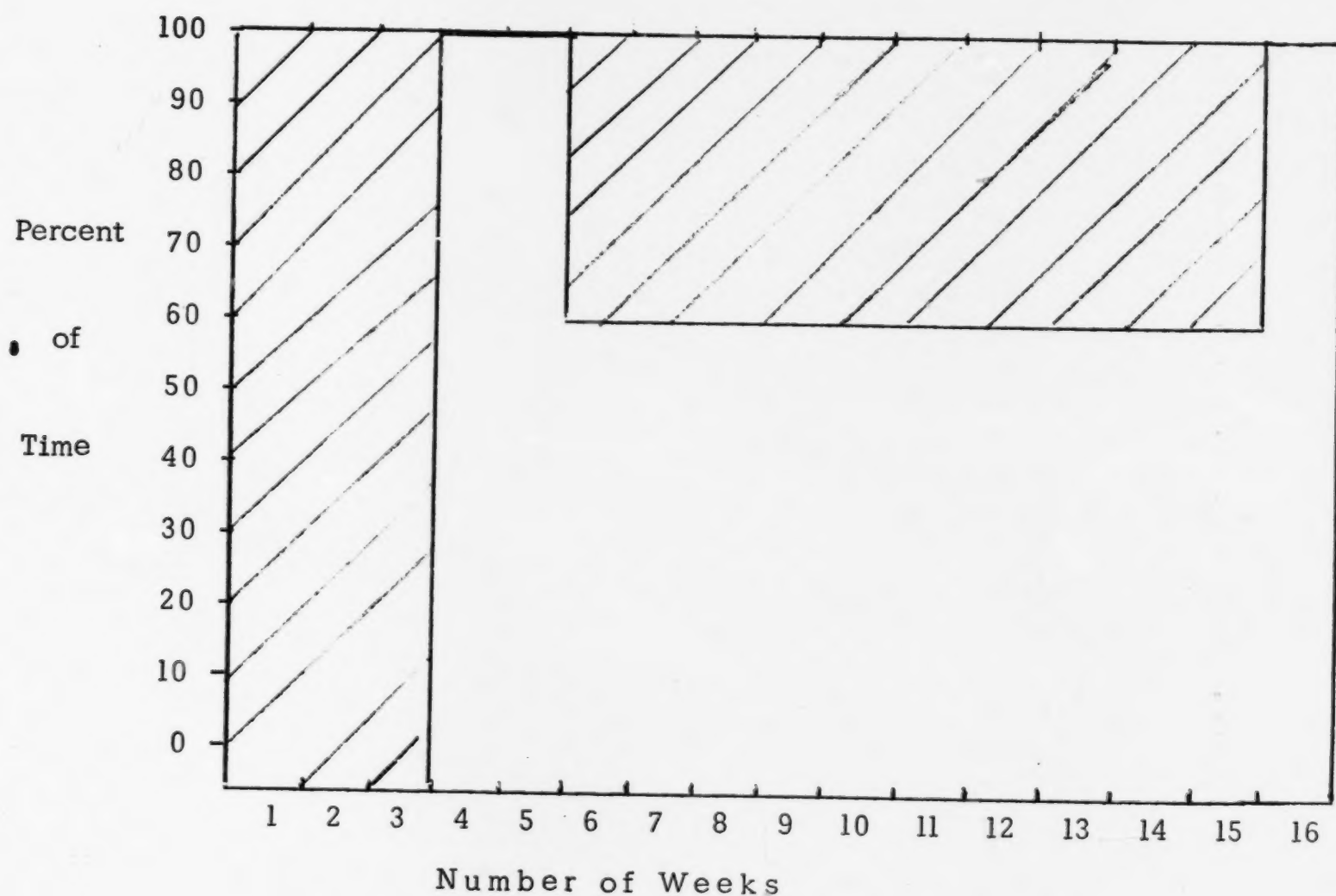
Demographic data on those selected indicate an age range of from twenty to twenty-seven with a mean of twenty-two. Their prior work experience had been at best sporadic and all had been employed at some

time as unskilled operatives or as domestics. Only two were married, and among them they possessed five children. Their stated education level ranged from grade 5 to grade 10 with a mean of grade 7 and an I. Q. range of 65 to 91 with a mean of 77.4. (8).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

This was an innovative program of training for day care attendants. It lasted 420 hours and was divided into (1) three weeks of orientation and observation of operating centers, (2) two weeks of intensive theory and (3) a period of eleven weeks during which the trainees spent the mornings in a day care center working under supervision and their afternoons in a classroom in which the supervisor instructed them. In this way they received approximately equal proportions of theory and on-the-job training, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of training time (shaded area indicates classroom, open area indicates on-the-job training.)



The curriculum for the program was developed by the Instructor and the Home Economics Co-ordinator utilizing available research on similar programs, and materials that educators felt were important to teaching the care of children. The program was aimed toward nine minor objectives; the time spent on each objective depended on the importance of each and

the ability of the trainee to assimilate the material. At all times training was geared to the trainees' educational and I. Q. level, with continual reinforcement being given on the job.

As Figure 1 indicates, the first three weeks of the program consisted of classroom activity. At the beginning, the trainees were very attentive but most of them seemed afraid to take any active part in the discussions. In order to hold their interest, special care was used in the wording and detail of explanations, and flexibility was built into the sequence of presentation to allow for treatment of component items at the height of trainee interest. Variety was infused to the program by alternating periods of lecture and discussion, questions and problems, activities involving the educational toys and other equipment to be used in a day care center, the use of films, and review sessions in spelling and English. The art of good spelling and English usage could not be considered an essential ability in day care work; however, it was felt that it was necessary in order to have reasonably efficient reporting and record keeping. It is conceivable, that if trainees did improve their abilities in these areas, the children in their care might also be expected to improve through contact with them.

In the classroom, additional resource people spoke and sparked discussion on a variety of topics such as the value of nutrition in child

growth and development, with emphasis on meal planning following the requirements of Canada's Food Guide. Another topic using resource persons was the proper use of children's art as a means of developing self expression and creativity. At the same time there were practical demonstrations of art materials available to the Day Care Centers.

At the beginning of the fourth week of the project, a Day Care Center opened. During the next two weeks the trainees remained in the center full time in order to provide a period of orientation and adjustment for both trainees and children. Following those weeks, except for occasions when circumstances made it impractical, the trainees reported daily to the center for four hours of on-the-job-training, then to the classroom for a period of instruction.

The type of material covered in these afternoon classroom sessions included (1) discussion of problems arising from their on-the-job training experience, (2) counselling on an individual basis, (3) instruction and practice in the planning of activities to provide a well balanced program in the Day Care Centers, and (4) the efficient use of film projectors and video tape equipment, which was demonstrated by an audio-visual technician.

During the last week of training the trainees were allowed to work without supervision, to provide practical experience in preparation for their

coming employment. During this time the personnel co-ordinator met with the trainees to explain Company policies, to answer questions, and to clear up any misunderstandings that might arise concerning their transition from trainees to employees. Training was completed on August 29, 1969; employment commenced on September 2, in the Day Care Centers.

Throughout the period of training, the trainees were consistently encouraged to show self expression, responsibility, and originality in their roles as Day Care Attendants. In O.J.T. time, trainees were rated through observation to measure their interaction with peers and children and their ability to work as Day Care Attendants. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to reporting the results of those measures in relation to the stated objectives.

STUDY METHODOLOGY:

Sources of Data:

Several sources of data and methodologies of collection were used, relating to the three objectives stated previously. All data depended on observation at some point and then recording it on forms developed by project staff. The instructor had primary responsibility, and a reliability check was developed through periodic observations by a research evaluator. The project manager, a professional Home Economist, was responsible for data pertaining to project related activities but which took place external

to the project itself.

The major objective related to the trainees' abilities and their successful training as Day Care Attendants. Data on these factors were developed as follows:

1. Child Care Ability:

(a) Observation Rating Form for Day Care Attendants (9)

This form included five major activity areas and eighteen sub-areas relating to the trainees' interaction with the children and with co-workers, and to miscellaneous activities such as record-keeping planning, and initiative. The record consisted of the amount of time each trainee spent in each activity area. Observations were made daily and compiled weekly by the instructor who also made a weekly subjective evaluation of overall trainee participation.

(b) Change in attitude and appearance of the trainees.

Measures of these attributes were gathered from three sources. The instructor made a weekly report on each trainee. These reports, though subjective, provide a very comprehensive picture of each individual. A research assistant made similar evaluations through observation of the trainees at work and relaxing with co-workers and with children. Finally a trained guidance counsellor administered standardized tests and interviewed the trainees at the beginning and the termination of the pro-

gram and recorded evaluations of these factors.

2. A second objective was to demonstrate the utility of Day Care Centers as a component in a series of designated growth communities. Data on this factor depended on (1) maintaining records of requests for such training programs and on (2) evidence of government activity regarding the establishment of Day Care Centers in the Province. These data were gathered mainly by the project manager.

3. The final objective was to bring about a significant change in labor market stability of the trainees. Since they were to be employed by the Corporation, this could not be equated with successful placement but must be measured in terms of comparative length of employment before and after the program.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS:

The Observation Rating Forms described above were coded and compiled for each trainee weekly. In this way, trainees' achievement of the five major areas over the life time of the project can be evaluated. It should be noted that each trainee went through the activities series with two groups of children (Group 1, aged two and one half to four; Group 2, aged four and one-half to six,) and also in the kitchen. Weekly scores reflect this change in tasks as well as developmental changes.

In the following diagrams, (Figure 2 through 5), which present data

from the observation forms, values were arrived at by adding individual scores each week for each activity, and then developing a mean score for the group of trainees. It is this final mean score which is presented.

Information is presented for only a five week period rather than for the full training term. The five weeks were selected from the ten week period during which the trainees spent sixty per cent of their time in on-the-job training, since at this time the program should have run long enough for changes to be noticeable, yet left time for improving areas of weakness. Ratings varied widely over this five week period. In general interaction during the fifth week tended to be low since the program was nearing completion, and more time was spent in that week in the classroom. Also, staff reported that in general trainees seemed to lose interest during the weeks when more time was spent out of the Day Care Centers. During these weeks they also reported problems in adjusting to the variety of activities.

ANALYSIS:

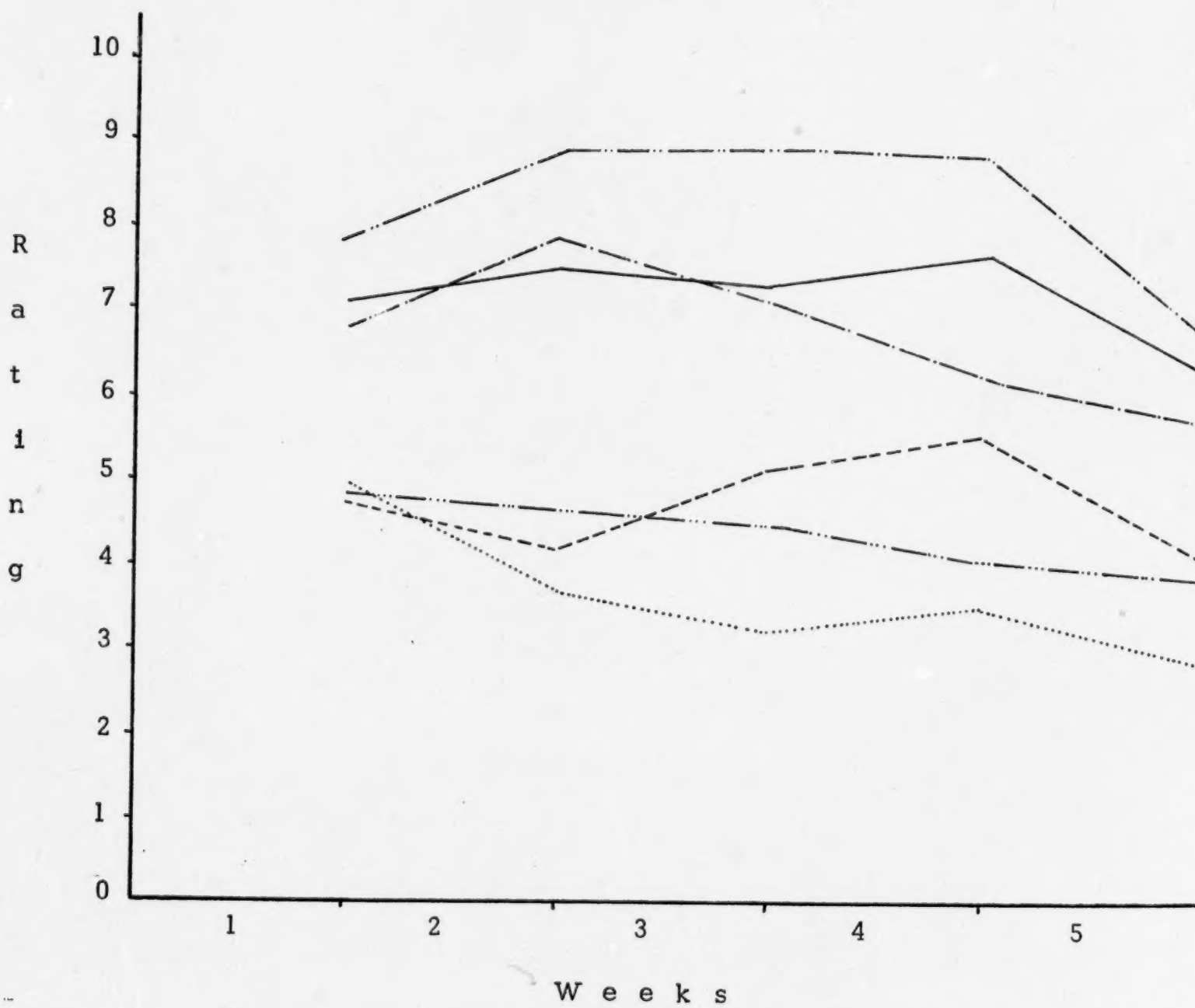
Child Care Ability:

Figure 2 presents the group mean scores on the six activity codes relating to trainees' verbal interaction with the children. These activities include encouraging and giving praise; instructing and demonstrating new material; reading, telling stories and structured activities; developing

Figure 2

Verbal interaction
with child

Code	Legend
01	Encouraging Speaking
02	Instructing
03	Reading
04	Developing Concepts
05	Encouraging Interacting
06	Setting Limits



concepts; encouraging verbalization; and setting limits.

As noted previously, all scores tended to go down during the final week. The six types of activity seem also to have fallen into two natural groups represented by code 02, instructing and demonstrating, code 06 setting limits, and code 03 reading and structured activities, forming the low group and the remaining three forming a higher one. While these concepts are not carefully defined, we may subjectively and rather loosely categorize them as affective (the higher group) and skill (the lower group) attributes. It is quite possible then, that trainees were reluctant to instruct, to read aloud and in general to engage in structured activities in which they felt weak. Included in the higher group are two attributes which involve encouraging the child to speak and to interact with others. Code 04, developing concepts, may represent an aberration.

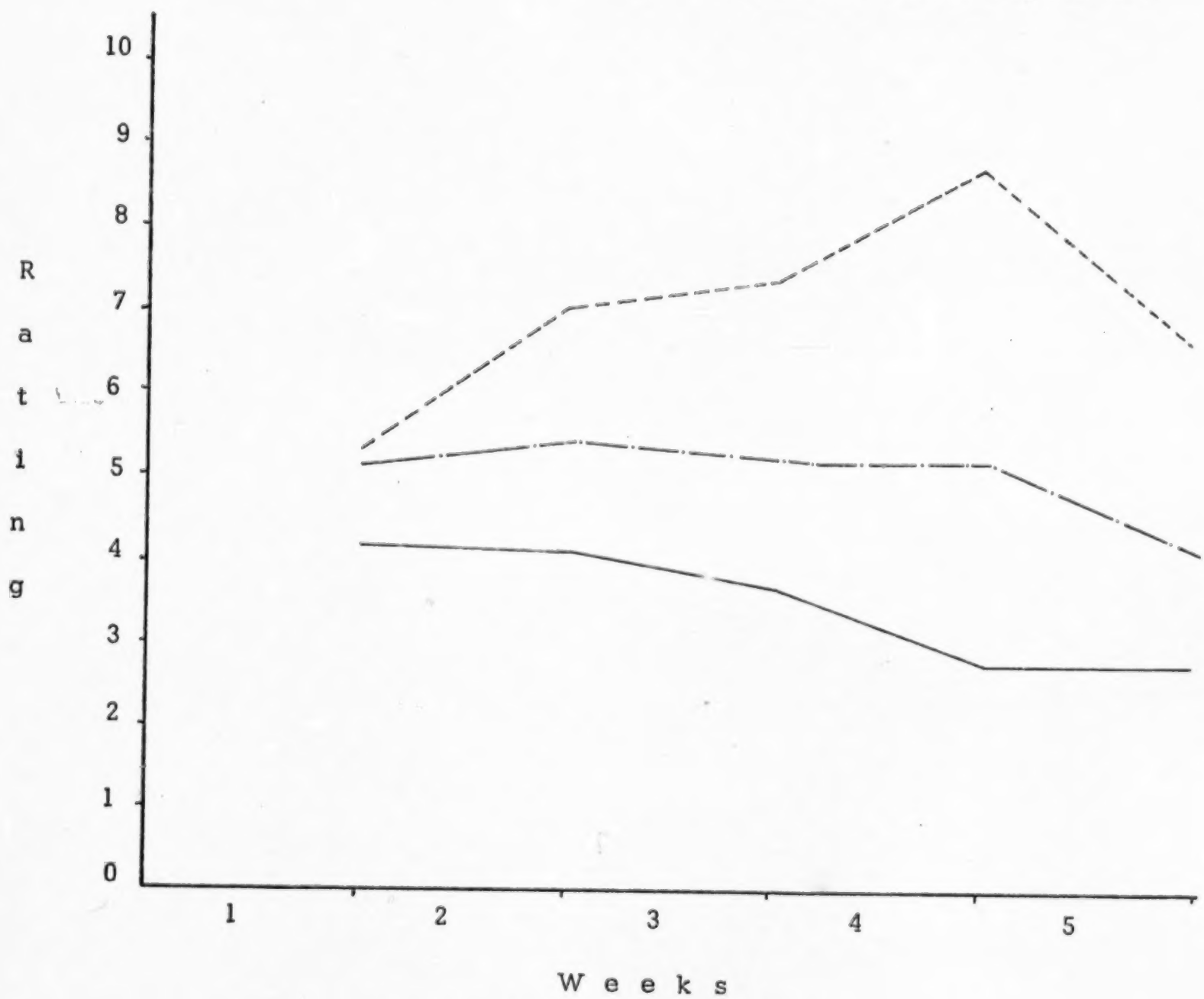
Figure 3 presents the group mean scores for non-verbal interaction with the children. Included in these activities are supervising children (code 09) and listening to them either on request (code 08) or in the unobtrusive observing sense (code 07).

It is clear that the trainees were better as supervisors than as listeners. Again, though concepts are not well defined, we might assume that supervision, since it was differentiated from listening was more passive and less skilled activity. Similarly we note that trainee initiated

Figure 3

Non-verbal interaction
with child

Code	Legend
07	Listening (unobstrusive)
08	Listening (when asked)
09	Supervising children



listening (an active process) was the lowest rated of these activities.

Figure 4 and Figure 5 present the mean group scores achieved in the verbal and non-verbal interaction with co-worker activities. Code 10 refers to discussion of plans and problems, code 11 with general social exchange, code 13 with cooperation in preparing activities and in cleaning up, and code 14 with initiating assistance when problems arise.

Codes 10 and 11 run counter to the trend we have observed, since during the fifth week they show an upturn. It is difficult to explain why there was the low rating in social exchange, since the trainees had participated together in earlier work and training experience. In addition, they were asked their co-worker preferences and these were adhered to, to some extent, in forming work groups.

Cooperating activities (code 13) showed a steady decline over the five week period, reaching a very low point in the final week. It is not clear why this is so, since all other co-worker interaction indicators rose at that time. Perhaps each individual had reached a level of proficiency and efficiency and only required assistance in problem situations as indicated by Figure 4 (code 14).

The final group of activities which were observed and scored was felt in the final evaluation not to be important as indicators of child care ability. In fact, very little opportunity was afforded for the trainees to

Figure 4

Verbal interaction with
co-workers.

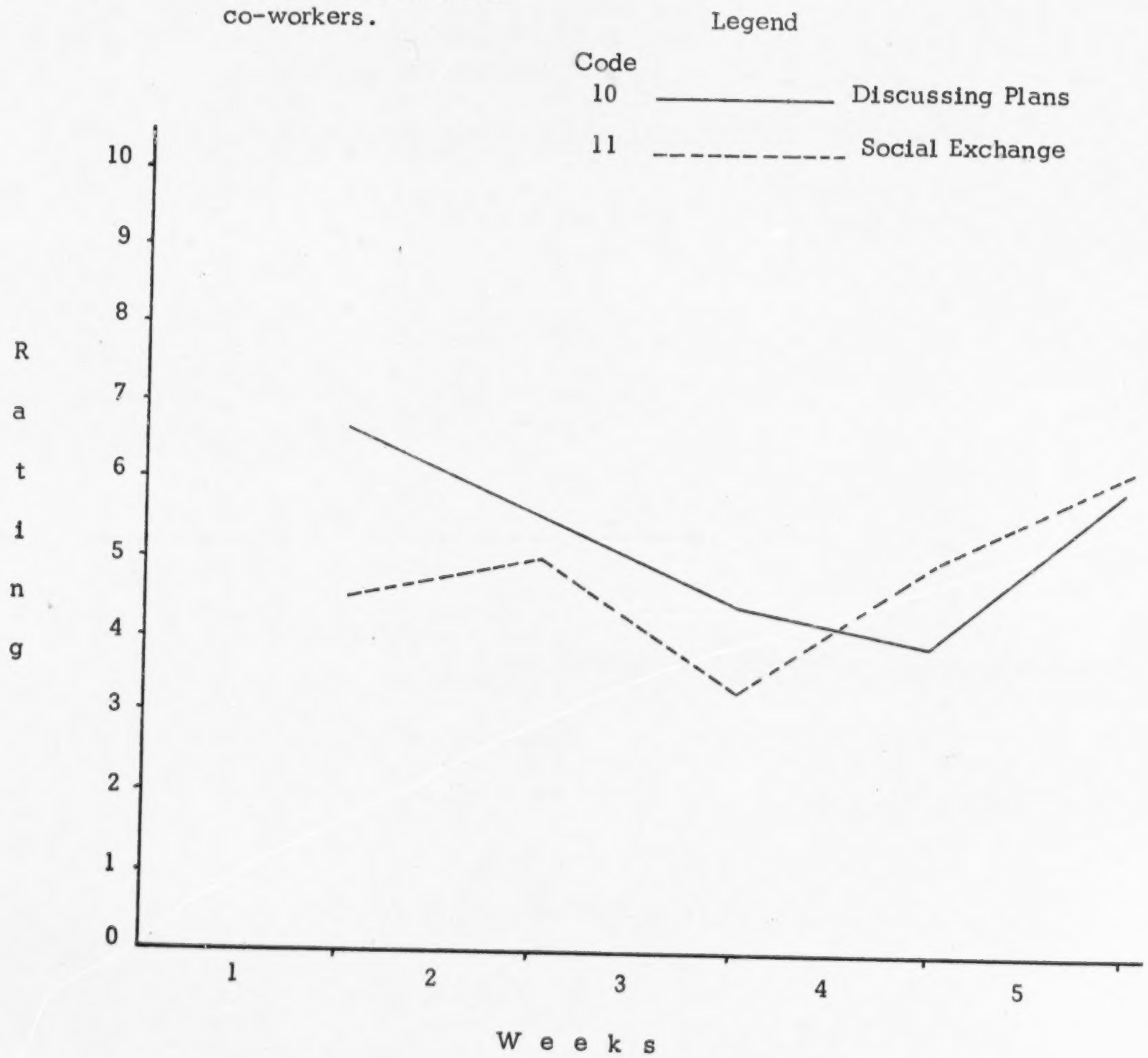
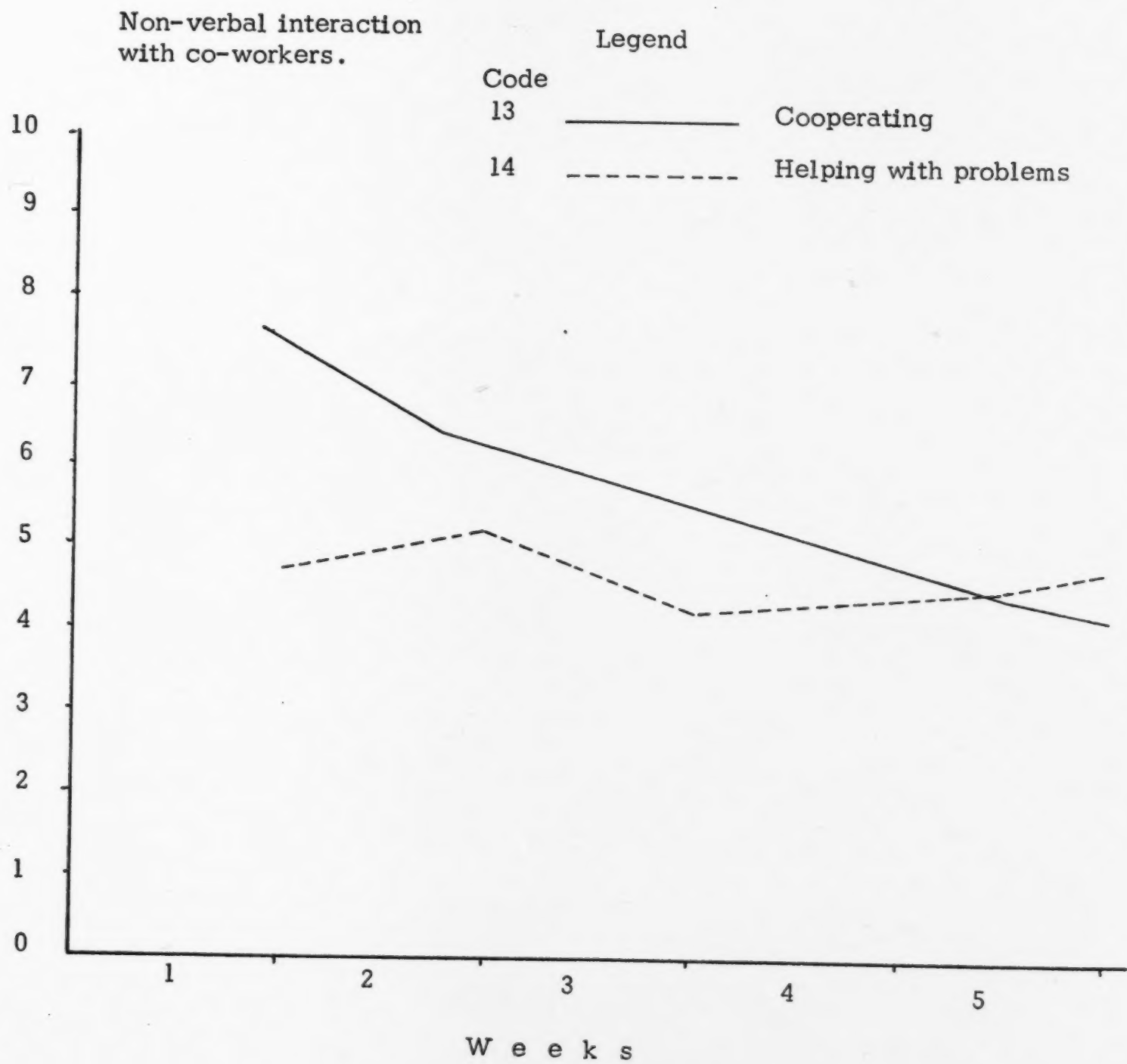


Figure 5



demonstrate any improvement or even original ability on these factors. They included planning, record keeping and greeting visitors, as well as a general category which attempted to measure idleness or lack of it.

In addition to child care skills, the instructor made observations and judgements in regard to changes in trainees appearance and attitudes. These weekly recorded observations were reinforced by the pre- and post-program observations of the guidance counselor. In general, these observers agreed that trainees did become more orderly in their dress and personal appearance. They also felt that trainees became more patient, outgoing and understanding, and increased their responsibility and initiative in the performance of their duties.

It is clear that the latter judgement is not supported by the data recorded daily by the instructor, and presented in the preceding diagrams. Unfortunately since no control group was established, no comparison can be made and no firm statements can be made concerning change or its attribution to the training program.

Need for training for Day Care Centers:

Data pertaining to this objective were generated from several sources. This type of analysis is one of the difficulties and one of the major weaknesses generic to evaluating social action programs with the poor and the underemployed, i.e., to accurately gauge the need for services and other

intervention. (10)

The project manager reported receiving requests for the training package from several sources, including other NewStart Corporations, the Canada Department of Regional Economic Expansion, the Provincial College of Applied Arts and Technology (Holland College) and the Provincial Department of Welfare. In addition, subsequent to training, when the program had become operational, she became involved in studies and committee activity for drawing up legislation for Day Care Centers at the request of the Provincial government.

Several Day Care Centers, "kindergartens", and other child care services operate in the province. A survey of these operations indicated little interest in the training program, although some interest was expressed in employing trained personnel, "if any openings occur in present staff."

The project manager also reported that several inquiries were made by home economics teachers in local secondary schools about the program. Teachers initiating the inquiries were interested in special programs for potential school dropouts and other special children. To date, no other institution has adopted the program.

Data on requests or applications for the training are incomplete; the project manager reported several such requests but only two were

officially recorded. Two factors may be working to confuse this matter. In the first place, requests for employment as attendants were received which may have been interpreted as requests for training by her. In any case there was neither employment nor the pre-requisite training available.

Secondly, it was the general experience of the sponsoring Corporation that applicants for training, when informed that a particular type of training was not available, simply changed their request to whatever was available. In such cases, the second choice was the one recorded. This probably happened in many instances in this program. While these occurrences tend to confound data collection and drawing inferences about subjects' interests, it may be an important observed phenomena to others engaged in manpower development, to students of occupational choice and to those who offer training allowances which they hope will contribute to eventual rational job placement.

In summary however, it is not possible to conclude that this program has yet successfully demonstrated that training Day Care Attendants or providing a Day Care Service can provide a useful or valuable input to outreach centers in designated regional growth centers. It is quite probable that the objective as originally stated was not tested. However, there is equally little evidence with which to answer the related question

relating to the need for training as Day Care Attendants among the target population.

Employment Stability:

Prior to entering NewStart training programs all of the Day Care Attendant trainees had been engaged in temporary employment as domestics and as operatives in fish processing plants. Subsequent to the training, all eight (of nine) who completed the course were employed as Day Care Attendants. At the time of writing (one year later) all were still employed, and according to their supervisors and the Project Manager, all were working satisfactorily. There is every reason to believe that, if efforts to develop a system of such service centers in the Province are successful, they will remain steadily employed in the field.

CONCLUSION:

The "objective" data do not support the statement that trainees improved in their ability to perform adequately as Child Care Attendants. There exists the strong possibility however, that the problem lies more with the measurement than with actual lack of change. The instrument was teacher prepared and implemented, which raises questions of validity and reliability. There is also the strong possibility of central tendency of ratings, which makes difficult any discernment of change. Therefore, in this case, the better indicator is more probably the subjective opinions of

the instructor and the project manager. Prior to the course they felt that trainees should not be allowed any freedom to care for children in such a service, but they did allow them to do so toward the end of the course and subsequently, without direct supervision. That their ability did improve is clear; what the factors in this ability are, and how to measure them still remains a question.

Interest in improving and controlling a Day Care system in the Province was aroused but probably more because of the operating center which followed rather than because of the training program or the availability of trained personnel. A follow-up study will be conducted which records and analyzes this process. A brief overview of the activities is contained in a prior publication. (11)

Trainees did experience improvement in labor market attachment. Again, it is not possible to relate this change to any particular input. Related factors included the fact of training, availability of a job related to participants' interests and perceived abilities, opportunity to work year round at any employment, and others relating to new perceptions and aspirations.

In regard to the overall program and its evaluation, one can conclude that, subjectively, the course was successful. However, one must also conclude that much more firm evidence is required before definitive

statements can be made and before potential users can apply findings with confidence. Those contemplating Day Care Centers for disadvantaged children should not exclude consideration of the possible benefits to be gained in training disadvantaged young women as attendants in such centers. In the light of the finding regarding the passivity of this group of trainees, such administrators should perhaps ensure that a professional supervisor is in charge at all times.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations which follow are of two types. One deals with course improvement, the other with recommendations for policy and for research.

Course improvement recommendations are that more time should be devoted to curriculum development and to developing materials of instruction. The project operators agreed that a more distinct division between theoretical and practical aspects of training should be effected. The recommended sequence is theory, evolving into theory-and-observation, followed by on-the-job-training and then employment.

They also recommended project reviews and case conferences frequently during the progress of the course so that review findings can be implemented at the time when greater advantage may occur.

Implications for research have been alluded to, but may bear ex-

plication. Certainly it was possible to have put more thought into criteria and measurement. However, there exists the strong probability that such theoretical exercises will not produce greatest fruit in social action programs among the poor. A form of pre-evaluative research (12) is required to identify the important variables which may then be measured. In this regard, Mayo's (13) comment in regard to scientific abstraction and Rogers' (14) view on the origin of hypotheses may be applied to developing criteria. Mayo states that they "are not drawn from thin air or uncontrolled reflection; they are from the beginning rooted deeply in a pre-existent skill." Rogers says they are "the product of experience, not the forerunner."

Individuals, institutions and decision makers who wish to conduct action- or operations- or evaluative-research would do well to draw their concepts and measurements from experience rather than attempt to reverse the order.

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APPENDIX 1

The curriculum for the program was divided into nine minor objectives, the time spent on each objective depended on the importance of each, as viewed subjectively by Project Manager, and by the ability of trainees, previous to training.

1. Understand the role of a Day Care Attendant
2. Develop knowledge of different types of child care services
3. Understand a child's needs
4. Understand how a child learns
5. Understand role of play in total growth processes
6. Understand role of nutrition in growth process
7. Understand safety of children
8. Develop knowledge and skill in observing children
9. Be knowledgeable about administrative procedures.

APPENDIX 2

OBSERVATION RATING FORM FOR DAY CARE ATTENDANTS*

Name of Trainee _____ Date _____ Time _____
Center _____

I. Interaction with Child (verbal) Percent time spent at each

- 01 Encouraging, giving praise
- 02 Instructing, demonstrating new materials
- 03 Reading, telling story, structured activity
- 04 Developing concepts
- 05 Encouraging verbalization
- 06 Setting limits

II. Interaction with Child (non-verbal)

- 07 Listening - teacher initiated
- 08 Listening to child
- 09 Supervising child

III. Interaction with Co-Workers (verbal)

- 10 Discussion of plans, problems, activities
- 11 Social exchange
- 12 Talks about other trainees - constantly criticizing

IV. Interaction with Co-Workers (non-verbal)

- 13 Co-operating in preparing new activities, cleaning up, etc.
- 14 Moving in to help when a problem arises

V. Other Activities

- 15 Planning activities, picking up, etc.
- 16 Unoccupied
- 17 Greeting visitors, parents
- 18 Keeping records

* Adapted from Delinquency Study and Youth Development Project Southern Illinois University, Illinois.
"A Curriculum Development Program for Preschool Teacher Aids, Naylor, N.L. and M.L. Bitter, 1967.

APPENDIX 3

Active Interaction with Child (codes 01 - 08)
 Supervising Children's Activities (codes 09)
 Interaction with Co-Workers (codes 10, 12 - 14)
 Other Activities (codes 15 - 18)
 Non-Productive Time (codes 11, 17)

WEEKLY TABULATION OF TRAINEE

NAME:

DATE:

CODES:

	Percent Time	Percent Time	Percent Time	Percent Time	Percent Time	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
01						
02						
03						
04						
05						
06						
07						
08						
09						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
TOTAL	180	180	180	180	180	

After total type weekly comments on trainee:

APPENDIX 4

Raw Scores of Observation Rating Form for Each of the Eight Trainees

Code	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	
01	8	1	9	8	8	6							8	7	-	8	6							
02	5	6	5	6	2								7	3	-	3	3							
03	5	6	6	5	4	6	-	6	5	6			7	5	-	5	5							
04	7	8	7	6	6	8	-	8	6	7														
05	9	9	9	9	8	8	-	9	8	8														
06	5	4	4	5	5	4	-	3	5	4														
07	4	5	5	2	7	6	-	4	2	3														
08	8	6	8	9	8	5	-	7	7	8														
09	7	4	5	6	5	4	-	4	6	5														
10	6	6	6	4	6	6	6	2	2	A														
11	6	6	5	5	9	5	6	2	2	A														
12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	A														
13	7	6	5	4		8	8	5	5	4														
14	5	5	5	5		4	6	5	5	5														